

(TMI Journeys - August 2017)

## MY NEAR-DEATH EXPERIENCE: A DEFINING MOMENT IN MY LIFE

*by Buff Etheridge, TMI program graduate*



I drowned myself when I was 9 years old, in 1960. A pathologically shy girl invited to a pool party, young Buff didn't know how to swim. But I wanted to be liked and hadn't learned how to say No.

At poolside, imagining people laughing at me for not joining in, I slipped into the deep end and found myself flailing frantically as I sank helplessly, settling like a rock onto the concrete bottom.

Looking up at the dance of sparkling sunlight reflecting through the water above me, I realized I was going to die ... not a concept that as a child I had ever given a second's thought.

The instant I realized that I would never reach that surface, I found myself outside my body. To this day I remember instant immersion into a total matrix of LOVE. It was all that mattered. Love was far beyond non-trite ... it was tangibly real. It was everything. It was Home.

I swam, formless, in the beauty of undefinable, infinite Love, connected to All, in a timeless dimension.

Seamlessly, I transitioned to reviewing my entire short life ... in earth time. This review took a full nine years to re-experience. Love was the standard against which every action of my child's life was measured. And I was the only judge ... there were no secrets from myself or the watching universe as every action, thought, and intention of my life came into being again for "judgement."

If I'd acted selfishly, embarrassment beyond words inflamed me, my lack of compassion observed and experienced by infinite numbers of sentient and loving, unseen higher beings.

And yet, thankfully, the reverse was also true. The kindness and generosity I had offered, I then experienced from the recipients' bodies and perspectives ... instant karma.



It felt like the entire universe watched and applauded those simple moments of a child's open heartedness, filled with pride and love for me.

After years of reliving my entire life, popping in and out of my life-review "body" and the minds and bodies of those I'd affected, suddenly the circle of life was complete. Time itself stretched and distorted. The entire review sequence that had taken years had also taken only seconds.

Unbelievably, I awoke back in my almost-drowned child's body, having been rescued by an observant teenage girl only seconds after I had given up the struggle. No water had passed my lips. Release from my body came the instant I saw death as inevitable ... miraculously freed from my body before physical suffering began.

Life changed immensely of course. Physically, watches, lightbulbs, and streetlamps burned out when my emotions peaked.

Emotionally, I was still shy, but learned not to worry about what others thought, instead, instinctively looked for what others might need. Concurrently, the search for understanding of my NDE led me to adventures and friendships among like-minded people, with a resonant heart-home found at TMI.

Through logically-incomprehensible action that led me to the brink of death and beyond, the drowning experience had a rightness and sense of destiny about it ... like I had pre-planned a ridiculous, destructive decision, knowing it would become the defining moment of my life ... permanently moving my internal yardstick away from Ego to Other.

An additional bonus ... I was motivated to learn how to swim!

I am one of the lucky ones who knows you are more than your physical body, that time is a flexible construct and that Love is the standard by which we judge ourselves.

Not bad for a silly little 9-year-old girl afraid of her own shadow.